THE BOOK PLATES
OF
EDMUND H. GARRETT

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Book-plates selected from
the works of Edmund H.
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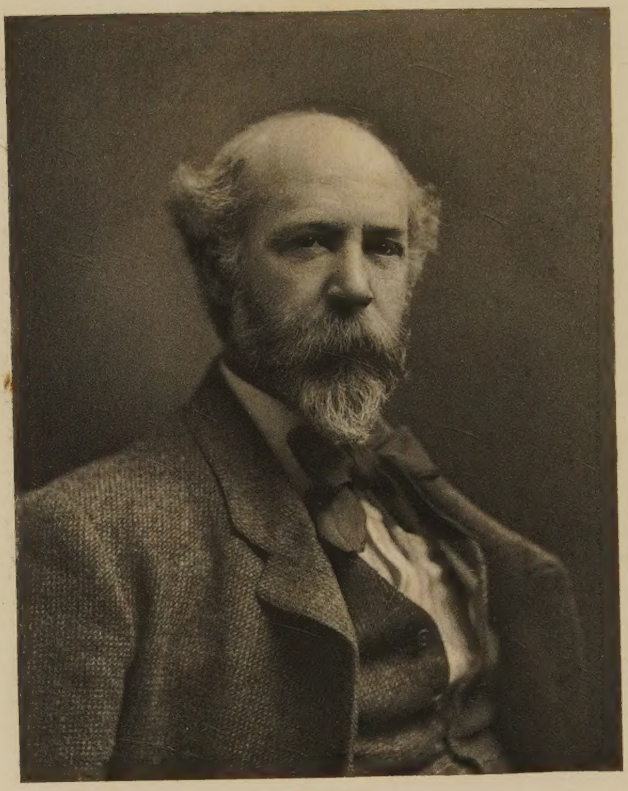

Edmund H. Garrett.

Book-plates

selected from the works of Edmund H. Garrett & a notice of them by William Howe Downes

The Crouts-dale Press
Boston A. m. c m. iiii

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"Book-plates have been steadily multiplying and their use becoming more and more general, until to-day not to own a book-plate with which to mark your books is to argue yourself quite out of the trend of culture and education."

Zella Allen Dixson. "*Concerning Book-plates.*"

MR. GARRETT is the author of about fifty book-plates, the examples here shown being among the best and most characteristic. His experience as designer, illustrator, engraver and painter, combined with his native endowment of taste, inventiveness and fancy, admirably equips him for this kind of artistic work. The designing of a book-plate calls for a high order of decorative talent. There is room for a great deal of the personal element, of course, but restraint and sobriety, with a clear comprehension of the limita-

tions of conventional decoration on a small scale, are imperatively required for success in this field. The fundamental principles that govern all decoration apply with even more than ordinary force here, because the infringement of them must be especially noticeable in a small design. Unity, compactness, and a fair balance of the black and white spaces are undoubtably the first requirements. To meet these requirements fully, the designer ought not to be encumbered with too much symbolic material, but should be permitted to give a reasonable degree of free play to his own ideas. Every owner of a good library is likely to be fortunate in the possession of a hobby, and when the desire to have a book-plate arises, it is natural and fitting to ask the designer to perpetuate that hobby by some appropriate bit of symbolism. But when it comes to more than one hobby, when Pelion is piled on Ossa, the oversupply of raw material becomes merely an embarrassment to the artist, and threatens the integrity of his design. An ingenious designer is usually able, it is true, to work a certain number of not too salient allegories into the corners, borders, and nooks of his design, without laying too much stress upon them;

VINCIT PERICULA VIRTUS
Ex Libris
George M. Thornton

but the whole drawing must, if it is to be first-rate, be built up around a single, unified, central motive, to which all the rest of the work must be subordinate. Above all, the first-rate book-plate must, with few exceptions, be conceived upon conventional lines; and it is obvious that heraldry lends itself most readily and naturally to this class of design.

Among the best of Mr. Garrett's book-plates in which armorial bearings are employed as the chief features of the designs are those of Dr. John W. Farlow, Arthur Curtis Judd, J. Otis Wardwell, William Phillips, Dr. William M. Conant, and George M. Thornton. These are the best American book-plates with which I am acquainted, by virtue of the excellence of their design, the perfect adaptation to their purpose, and the distinct beauty of their execution in all its parts. They are etched plates, in which the intrinsic quality of the line is one of the most conspicuous elements of merit. It is not easy to explain the superiority of the etched line over the graver-cut line, but it is very easy to see it, when opportunities for comparison arise. The bitten line has infinitely more character, flexibility and variety;

it has more life and color; it is in every way a more artistic and expressive medium. Mr. Garrett's style, as exemplified in his book-plates, is remarkable for its delicacy, precision, and certainty of touch. The quality of daintiness could go no further. Yet it is not tainted by mere prettiness, because there is firmness of technique, severity of motive, and a nice application of means to the end.

Besides the book-plates in which armorial bearings are used as the leading motive of the design, it will be noticed that Mr. Garrett has occasionally employed subjects of a naturalistic order, as in the example where a pleasing glimpse of the owner's veranda appears in the centre of the plate. This pictorial theme is tactfully treated, but as a general rule such motives are far less amenable to successful decorative employment than strictly conventional designs. It will be remarked, undoubtedly, that Mr. Garrett's borders are of especial ingenuity and beauty, and that they play an important part. Such a border as that in the Belmont Library book-plate, for example, taken in conjunction with a good arrangement of the inscription, which is an organic portion of the decorative scheme, seems to be in and of itself a sufficient,

BOOKS TO INSTRUCT
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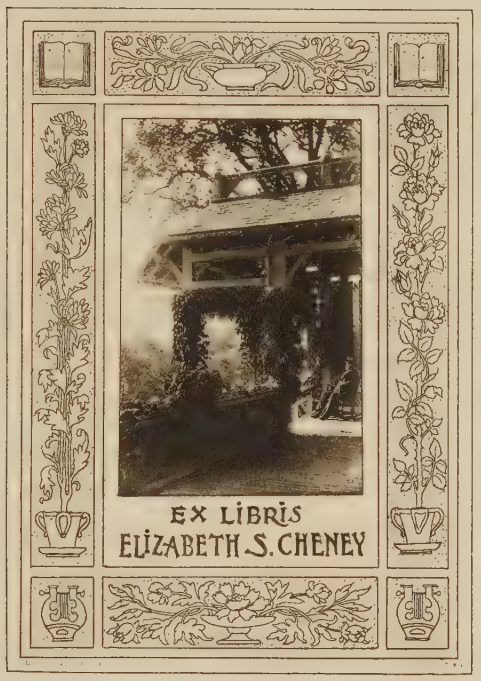
GEORGE·A·FERNALD

dignified and satisfactory piece of decoration. For a public institution it is especially appropriate because a little more than the ordinary degree of severity is desirable in such cases. And, since we have spoken of the inscription, it is proper to add that the lettering, a vital point, is one of the strong features of superiority in nearly all Mr. Garrett's plates. The slightest error of scale, the slightest slip in the placing of the inscription, and, of course the least lack of style in the lettering, in the relationship it has to the rest of the design, is enough to ruin, and as a matter of fact has ruined, many an otherwise excellent book-plate. But Mr. Garrett whose title pages are works of art, and whose bibliophilic taste amounts to genius, is incapable of making any such mistakes; his instinct for the right proportions, the right spacing, the right style of letter, and the first-rate execution of this part of his work, is infallible. For the severe class of book-plates, the Roman capital letter, — surely, nothing better will ever be invented, —but the scale and the placing of it is an art in itself; and for the freer, more intimate, more personal class of designs, the various modifications of the black-letter, or the quaint, flowing, intricate

pattern of script capitals, interlocked, like a vine, with a touch of vagrant fantasy, exhaling a breath of the days of Friendship's Offering, when Byron wrote and Turner painted.

In those examples which are, from the decorative point of view, the least interesting, I think it will be found that there is much originality and ingenuity, as well as much workmanship of a high order of excellence; and the regards in which they fall short of the best standards are, I venture to say, largely due to the unreasonable requirements of the clients themselves, who, as is the way of clients, consider themselves competent judges in certain technical matters where a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. A near parallel to this condition is to be found in portrait painting, a line of work which, except in the cases of those artists who can afford to be autocrats, is little short of penal servitude, or a state of vassalage. When will it be realized that utter freedom is the first condition of artistic productivity, and that there is nothing worth utterance but a man's own thought?

In comparing Mr. Garrett's really representative work in this line with that of other artists, I have been struck more by his refinement of taste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ELIZABETH S. CHENEY

than any other quality, though I do not hesitate to say that he stands almost alone also in respect of design and workmanship. When he has a free field for the exercise of his taste, inventiveness, and fancy, there is no one like him.

A CHECK-LIST OF MR. GARRETT'S BOOK-PLATES.

A NUMBERED LIST OF MR. GARRETT'S BOOK-PLATES FROM 1893 TO 1904.

The following numbers do not agree with the numbers on the book-plates themselves for the latter refer to all etchings, book illustrations as well as book-plates, executed by Mr. Garrett since 1892.

Almost all his book-plates it will be noticed have been etched on copper by himself; two were etched by W. H. W. Bicknell and one engraved by E. D.French. The photogravure, photo lithography, and the zinc etching process have been used in some instances, and two examples are the work of other designers. Although these plates which are not wholly the work of Mr. Garrett must be of much less interest they are here, for the convenience of collectors, included in the list with the plates entirely of his own workmanship. The list has been submitted to Mr. Garrett and is the only correct one in print.

1893

1 *Francis Wilson.* *Etched by W. H. W. Bicknell*

2 *Francis Wilson.* *Zinc etching*

3 *Paul Lemperly.* *Zinc etching*
There are two sizes of this plate.

4 *Joseph H. Wheeler.* *Zinc Etching*

5 *Charles Dexter Allen.* *Etched by W. H. W. Bicknell*
There is a small photogravure of this plate, first used on the title page of "American Book-Plates."

1894

6 *Edmund H. Garrett.* *Etched*

7 *Edmund H. Garrett.* *Etched*

8 *Joseph H. Wheeler. Same as No. 4.* *Etched*

9 *The University Club.* *Etched*
Also exists with the date MDCCCXCII and a variation in the border.

1895

10 *Hiram EdmundDeats.* *Etched*

11 *Frederick W. French.* *Etched*

12 *Florence Sylva Wheeler.* *Etched*

1896

13 *Mary E. Norcross.* *Etched*

14 *Alfred Gooding.* *Photogravure*

15 *Frank Gair Macomber.* *Etched from an old tapestry*
A few prints with the arms differently disposed.

16 *Edwin Ruthven Lamson. 6 Beacon Street Boston 156 Fifth Avenue New York 1896.* *Engraved by E. D. French*
There is also a copy of this plate with the inscription, A Catalogue of Books Published by Lamson Wolffe and Company Boston New York and London 1896.

1897

17 *Henry A. Sherwin.* *Etched*

18 *Joseph Huntress Wheeler.* *Old plate altered*

19 *Wm. M. Conant M. D.* *Etched*

20 *C. Williams Jr.* *Etched*

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WILLIAM HALL
WALKER

1898

21 *De Witt Miller.* *Etched*

22 *John Sewall Alcott Pratt.* *Etched*

23 *Frank Lysacht Dunne.* *Etched*
Some prints with name Lysart.

1899

24 *William Phillips.* *Etched*

25 *J. Otis Wardwell.* *Etched*

26 *Eliza Atkins Stone.* *Zinc etching*

27 *M. Westall Pettee. Designed by Miss F. M. Pettee* *Etched*

1900

28 *Harvard University. Thompson Collection.* *Etched*

29 *Harvard University. Riant Collection.* *Etched*
Three variants of this plate as follows:
a. Bought with income of the Henry L. Pierce Fund.
b. Gift of John Harvey Treat of Lawrence.
One proof Lowell instead of Lawrence.
c. Divinity Library, Gift of the Society for Promoting Theological education.
One proof with Theological wrongly spelled.

30 *Arthur Curtis Judd.* *Etched*

31 *John Fiske.* *Etched*
A variety with variation in the motto.

32 *John W. Farlow M. D.* *Etched*

33 *Weston Public Library.* *Etched*
Also photo-lithograph of above.

1901

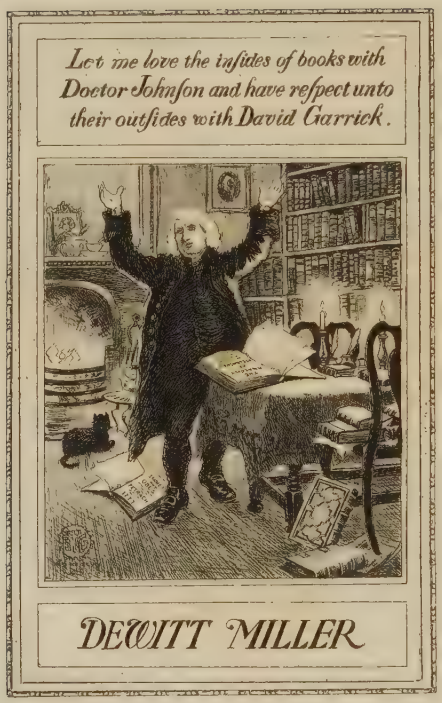
34 *George M. Thornton.* — *Etched*
35 *Elizabeth Cheney.* — *Etched*
36 *Leslie E. Kiley.* — *Zinc etching*
37 *Josiah Stearns Cushing.* — *Photogravure*
38 *Bowdoin College.* — *Photo-lithograph*

1902

39 *Edwin Scott and Edith Henry Barbour.* — *Photogravure*
40 *Lowell Public Library.* — *Photo lithograph*
41 *Elizabeth S. Cheney.* — *Etched*
42 *Belmont Public Library.* — *Etched*
Also photo-lithograph of above.
43 *Derby Public Library.* — *Etched*
Also photo-lithograph of above.
Five small donor plates for the same, all etched.
44 *a. George C. Allis*
45 *b. Dr. Charles C. Baldwin.*
46 *c. John W. Peck.*
47 *d. Sarah Riggs Humphrey Chapter D. A. R.*
48 *e. Reading Circle Library East Derby, Connecticutt.*

1903

49 *C. C. Clapp.* — *Etched*
50 *Thomas W. Lawson.* — *Etched*
51 *Dalton.* — *Etched*
The same altered.
52 *Robert Fletcher Allen. Memorial Plate.* — *Etched*


Let me love the insides of books with
Doctor Johnson and have respect unto
their outsides with David Garrick.
DEWITT MILLER

53 *Mary Cheney Davis.* *Etched*

54 *Mary Leroy King. Des. by Miss L. H. Sturtevant.* *Etched*

55 *William Hall Walker.* *Etched*

56 *George A. Fernald.* *Etched*

1904

57 *Gustave P. Wiksell.* *Etched*

TO THE
VOLKMANN
SCHOOL
IN MEMORY OF
ROBERT FLETCHER
ALLEN

* 1892 — 1903 †

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